

June 10, 2020

A special meeting of the Westfield School Committee was held on Wednesday, June 10 2020 at 7:00 pm remotely (due to COVID-19 crisis). Members present by roll call were: Ramon Diaz, Diane Mayhew, Bo Sullivan, Cindy Sullivan, Heather Sullivan, Tim O'Connor and Chairman Humason.

At 7:00 pm Chairman Humason called the meeting to order.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Public participation, excluding personnel: (submitted via email)  
Cindy Sullivan read the following emails from: Patrick Kennedy, Beth O'Connor, Lauren Dion, Laura Marx, and Wayde Dazelle (attached).
3. Review of the 2020-2021 Budget Proposal  
Superintendent Czaporowski reviewed the 2020-2021 budget proposal. A discussion took place and questions were answered. Ron Rix provided input and clarification regarding the budget proposal.
4. Approval of the 2020-2021 Budget  
Bo Sullivan moved, Ramon Diaz seconded to bring forward the FY2020-2021 budget figure of \$62,044,820 for the Westfield Public Schools to the Mayor/City Council.

The following roll call vote was taken:

	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	
Heather Sullivan	X		
Ramon Diaz	X		
Diane Mayhew	X		
Bo Sullivan	X		
Cindy Sullivan		X	
Tim O'Connor	X		
Chairman Humason	<u>X</u>		
	6	-	1 motion passes

At 8:42 pm Ramon Diaz moved, Heather Sullivan seconded to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. Motion passes.

Mr. Stefan Czaporowski, Superintendent of Schools  
Clerk – Westfield School Committee

A true copy, Attest:

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Cindy Sullivan, Secretary  
Westfield School Committee

CS/cm

June 1, 2020

Dear School Committee,

My name is Patrick Kennedy and I am a lifelong resident of Westfield. A graduate of Westfield High School (class of 1980), I furthered my education at Westfield State and have proudly served as your Westfield High School Band Director since the fall of 1997. Thanks to the support and encouragement of then-principal Stefan Czaporowski, I've been fortunate to expand instrumental music study to Westfield Technical Academy. Our band program in both schools has received tremendous support from city and school administration, building principals, faculty and the community over these past 20+ years and I am thankful for that support. I am also thankful to all of you on the school committee. I've come to know many of you over the years and realize that you always put kids first when difficult decisions need to be made. We are fortunate that their education is in your hands.

I am writing today to urge you to not allow the 4th grade elementary band program and the general music position at the Intermediate School to be cut from the Westfield Public Schools. The success of our high school program depends entirely on a strong elementary band program. It seems to me that our music program is bearing the brunt of the recently proposed cuts. Losing the elementary band position is a 25% cut in our instrumental staff, and the Intermediate School general music cut creates a 23% reduction to our city wide music faculty. I can say without reservation that our current music department consists of the most caring, empathetic, nurturing and professional music educators that I have had the honor to work with in my entire 32 year career. A great mix of young talent and veteran wisdom bringing a unified musical education to every school in our system.

We have offered Elementary Band to thousands of Westfield kids since 1948. This program begins a journey that creates stronger academic students who become even more engaged in their learning in all subject matter. It creates more confident students that learn to collaborate with others. This program teaches students at a young age about responsibility and the benefits of hard work. It gives the opportunity for students from all ranges of the academic spectrum to experience the power and joy of creating music together in a nurturing environment. As these students progress into the next levels it gives them an identity and a peer group that they know that they can count as they move into larger, often intimidating school buildings and for some, a scarier environment. It gives kids a safe space in school and a program that encourages civic and social responsibility, It creates successful musicians yet it also creates successful artists, business people, engineers, teachers, doctors, nurses, military personnel, scientists, politicians, lawyers, athletes, poets and the list goes on and on. It creates humanity.

I believe a community benefits from a strong band program in the public schools. A school system that values musical education attracts potential homeowners and taxpayers to the city. These types of citizens attract vibrant small businesses and provide the type of workforce that our larger businesses seek. I believe that an investment in music education is an investment in our community. The roots of the program begin in elementary band. Students need to begin the study of instrumental music in classes that are homogeneous by instrument, ideally in a class size between 6 and 10. These classes are realized by allowing for pull out lessons throughout the school day. While this type of scheduling is challenging to

building level administrators and classroom teachers, I offer the viewpoint that it strengthens individual student skills and competencies, allowing for more time in the classroom for individualized attention throughout the day for all students. I understand the pressures that standardized testing have brought to all of us , but I contend that we are all in this together and our focus needs to be on what is best for the students and not on what is easiest for the adults to manage and schedule.

It is hard to believe that just over a year ago that Westfield came together to celebrate our 350th anniversary. As I marched down Western Avenue and Court Street on May 19 with the combined WHS Band and WHS Alumni Band, I couldn't help but notice that--regardless of political views, socioeconomic position, race, color or creed--we were a united Westfield and we were Westfield Strong. On that day, who among us could have envisioned the dark cloud that we are under today?

We will get through this pandemic and this budget crisis together. I humbly ask that you make every effort to ensure that our Westfield Public School Music Program weathers the storm too.

Thank you for considering my viewpoint on these proposed cuts.

Sincerely,

Patrick Kennedy  
91 Barbara Street  
Westfield, MA 01085

[patrick.kennedy5@comcast.net](mailto:patrick.kennedy5@comcast.net)  
(413) 454-4659

Laura Marx, 8 Demond Ave, Westfield

Like many others, I was pleased to hear about the overwhelming number of public comments you received in support of the school budget at your last meeting. It sounds like it presented some logistical challenges just from sheer number!

At tonight's meeting and throughout the process, I hope you'll keep those comments from students, parents, teachers, and others in mind and push for a budget that meets the challenge and uncertainty of this coming year. Students can't wait for sales tax revenues to return to normal. We likely need more staff next year, not less, to meet requirements for re-opening the schools. And we already know that the students who needed the most help to begin with are faring the worst during the school closure and remote learning. Unfortunately, that will mean increased costs next year as many students will likely qualify for additional support and services to help them catch up and get back on track. Kids have made some of the deepest sacrifices to protect the health of us older folks. We owe it to them to do all we can to pay them back, both figuratively and literally, next year.

Thank you for all you do to support our schools and the creative teachers and administrators who have reinvented themselves over the past several months. Let's send them, and our students, out into the summer knowing they'll have the resources they need when schools reopen.

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Wayde D.H. Dazelle, Washington

My name is Wayde D. H. Dazelle. Although I currently reside in our nation's capital, I was born and raised in Westfield. I grew up on Tannery Road, worked at the Big Y over on East Main St, and graduated from Westfield High School in 2012 (Go Bombers). I am writing you today to urge you to reconsider the proposed cuts to the Arts in the Westfield Public School System, which I oppose as a former resident, as an economist, and as a student doctor at one of our nation's leading medical institutions. I would like to take a moment to address these concerns.

I would not be the man I am today without my experiences in the Music Department at Westfield High School. I am perhaps one of the most unlikely M.D. candidates that the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences has ever seen. I went through middle school and high school largely as a C and D student. I lacked direction, I lacked motivation, and I lacked purpose. My father was taken away from me just days after my 11<sup>th</sup> birthday. My mother had breast cancer and then lost her job shortly thereafter. If you asked my teachers and my guidance counselors where I would end up after high school, all but one would have told you, "I don't know, but nowhere good." Patrick Kennedy in the Music Department at Westfield High School might have been the only individual that ever genuinely believed in me.

I owe my life and its achievements to the Arts at Westfield High School. Music taught me not only *how* to learn, but how to *love* learning. The Arts gave me a pathway to a college education. They also helped me pay for it, as my mother died after my first year at school, requiring that I find some way to monetize my skillset if I wanted to complete my education with a roof over my head and food in my belly. The Arts taught me to dream and to dedicate myself to that dream. They taught me to innovate and push the boundaries of what is possible for one individual to create. They taught me to imagine something bigger than myself and to collaborate with others to make it a reality. In short, the Arts provided me with the experience, motivation, and perspective necessary to thrive in today's healthcare system. That's right – there are more ways than just one to become a doctor.

Because of my experiences in the Arts in the Westfield Public School System, I have gone on to achieve some remarkable things. I have worked in Uganda for six years now, first working on HIV/AIDS prevention with sex workers and peer support systems for former child soldiers, and later starting a child sex-trafficking prevention program. I have worked in Haiti for four years, developing women's sexual and reproductive health programming and becoming the Director of Education for a major safety net public health system for the city of Leogane. I pursued graduate health economics training and went on to work for the World Bank in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia to develop economic evaluations of tuberculosis programming. I have proposed food scarcity programming to alleviate iron deficiency anemia plaguing children from high altitude communities in Peru. I am the chief economist for a maternal-fetal medicine group in DC looking for innovative ways to combat America's growing maternal mortality crisis. Finally, I am a medical student at George Washington University within the highly competitive community and urban health program, where I participate as a volunteer for breast cancer screening, prison health, sex worker health, and COVID-19 testing programs.

Without my experiences in the Arts, none of this would have been possible. No one would have given me the benefit of the doubt. The countless lives that I have changed, improved, and saved might have met different ends. When I hear that Westfield is contemplating cuts to the Arts, I fear for the world, because when I hear about cuts to the Arts, I imagine each and every child who, quite like myself, will only find success in an environment embraces and nurtures their creativity. Cuts to the Arts threaten those children. Cuts to the Arts limit the possibilities before them. Cuts to the Arts threaten the lives that those children might then go on to change. Cuts to the Arts amplify the gap between the haves and the have-nots, as not all children can thrive in an environment where they are expected to sit at a desk for hours on end and be lectured at the entire day. While stationary, desk-based learning works for some, others like me cannot be successful in a system based on educational principles inherited from the industrial revolution. Our contributions to society are no less valuable. There are children whose dreams we risk with these austerity measures. Are you willing to risk sacrificing their success?

As an economist, I understand better than most the stress that your offices must be experiencing while you agonize over the budget. I understand that resources are scarce and that there are tradeoffs involved in every expenditure. I do not envy your positions. But implore you – please do not make the mistake of believing that the Arts are superfluous, that they are an amenity to be enjoyed in the course of pursuing a *real* education. Because for some like myself, the Arts are the only *real* education that they will ever truly receive. I owe my career as an economist and the lives that I save as a doctor to the Arts at Westfield High School.

I ask that you consider my experiences and my perspective in your discussions about the education budget as we move forward. I would be happy to discuss this further over the phone or through email at your convenience. If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know.

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Lauren Dion, Caitilin Way, Westfield

During this time of uncertainty, we, as a community, must do our absolute best to support our students and staff at all of the schools within the Westfield Public School system. As a taxpayer, parent and educator myself, I feel that funding our schools must remain a priority. Laying off staff is not the answer. Come fall, our schools will need enough teachers and support staff to deliver instruction whether in the classroom, remotely, or a combination of both. In order to implement any of these possibilities, you will need dedicated teachers striving to enhance remote learning, prepare curriculum and meet the social/emotional needs of the students. This can only be done by having

enough staff at all of the schools. Students will need teachers more than ever to help them make the transition between home and school learning. Please do not cut any teaching and support staff. At a time when teachers are going to have to cover standards from the previous grades, prepare students for college, and continue to nurture the development and growth of all students, you should be thinking about maintain current staff to student ratios. Our children's futures are in your hands. Make Westfield Public Schools the place where students continue to thrive under the instruction of valuable educators.

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Lauren Dion, Caitlin Way, Westfield

After reading some of the public comments from prior meetings, I felt the need to add to the voices of Westfield citizens. During this time of uncertainty, we, as a community, must do our absolute best to support our students and staff at all of the schools within the Westfield Public School system. As a taxpayer, parent and educator myself, I feel that funding our schools must remain a priority. Laying off staff is not the answer. Come fall, our schools will need enough teachers and support staff to deliver instruction whether in the classroom, remotely, or a combination of both. In order to implement any of these possibilities, you will need dedicated teachers striving to enhance remote learning, prepare curriculum and meet the social/emotional needs of the students. This can only be done by having enough staff at all of the schools. Students will need teachers more than ever to help them make the transition between home and school learning. Please do not cut any teaching and support staff. At a time when teachers are going to have to cover standards from the previous grades, prepare students for college, and continue to nurture the development and growth of all students, you should be thinking about maintain current staff to student ratios. Our children's futures are in your hands. Make Westfield Public Schools the place where students continue to thrive under the instruction of valuable educators.

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Team 87: Beth O'Connor, Jeff Gelinis, Jen Dion, CC Costello, Marc Stochel, Kelli Nielsen, Chloe Bronson

Last week when we wrote, we urged you to consider the impact of the proposed budget cuts on our students. Knowing how disastrous these cuts would be, we could only imagine the far reaching consequences the decision to approve this budget would have. We also feared that due to economic times, and the need to share the responsibility of the deficit, these dramatic cuts to staff and programs would be made.

While listening to the committee meeting, we were overwhelmed by your passionate commitment to maintaining a high quality of education in Westfield, and your refusal to compromise when it came to providing the children of Westfield with every opportunity for success. As a member of the school committee you promised to speak for our students, and on Monday, June 1st, you did.

While we realize that the struggle to balance the budget is far from over, we want to thank you for your commitment to the education of Westfield's children and we ask that you continue to support what is best for them.